

*Canada Post Corporation Act*

enlist its employees in a partnership to provide the better service Canadians want and need. If it does this, it will protect both the interests of the people of Canada and the people who work for the new Crown corporation.

We hope this bill will proceed fairly quickly, that it will be dealt with in committee and passed with a few amendments so that we can get on with the job.

I should like to refer to a couple of details. Clause 5.(2) reads in part as follows:

While maintaining basic customary postal service, the corporation, in carrying out its objects, shall have regard to—

It refers to a number of basic principles including, most important, the need to be self-sufficient in the long term. In our view this is unacceptable. Over the past several years the Post Office has been seriously curtailing services in a number of fields. Currently we are experiencing what amounts to an almost total freeze on the expansion of delivery services to new residential communities.

**Mr. Rose:** Suburban services.

**Mr. Orlikow:** Yes, suburban services.

**Mr. Rose:** It is a disservice.

**Mr. Orlikow:** I remind the minister that it took the imminence of the 1979 election for the then Liberal government to “unfreeze” hiring and to permit the hiring of some new letter carriers so that tens of thousands of people in almost every city of the country, who were quite justifiably complaining about not getting door-to-door service, would receive the same service as those living in older parts of cities. It took the threat of the 1979 election to unblock that freeze.

I hope the new Crown corporation will have the ability to serve new residential communities in every city of Canada, including my city of Winnipeg, with the same kind of service as people in older areas of the city have been receiving for generations.

We are against the elimination of small post offices which has been going ahead at a rapid rate, particularly on the prairies. We know serious consideration has been given to reducing services by rural post offices. We oppose that thinking. Those cutbacks are totally unacceptable and should not be allowed to continue under the Crown corporation. Clause 5.(2) of the bill must be tightened so that it specifically enumerates what makes up a basic customary postal service. This should include the principle of residential daily home delivery to all communities over a certain size; the maintenance of small rural post offices, excepting only under the most exceptional circumstances, and the maintenance of six days a week of service in all communities not served by a post office sub-branch, for example, a post office in a drugstore.

I want to voice one more concern, that is, the drive on the part of government departments, including the Post Office, to contract out work. We know what contracting out means. It is an easy way to reduce government expenditure. Of course, the way government expenditure is reduced is by eliminating the

jobs of people who work for the government and turning the service over to a private contractor who usually, if not always, pays the minimum wage or ten cents over the minimum wage. The private contractor has no conception of paying for holidays, pensions of anything else. Usually the private contractor is able to make a very substantial profit at the expense of the government, the service to the people and the employees whom he hires on a very casual basis. We will watch very carefully to see that the Crown corporation does not continue to expand the system of contracting out work which up to now has been done by people employed by the Post Office.

I say again to the minister that we support the principle of the establishment of a Crown corporation for the Post Office. We will probably make suggestions and amendments to the bill when it is sent to committee.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Bill Vankoughnet (Hastings-Frontenac):** Mr. Speaker, I had hoped that my first speech in the House since coming back from the summer recess would have dealt with the constitution, but I have an opportunity today to enter debate on another issue which is of great concern to Canadians. I am pleased to take part in the debate on Bill C-42, to establish the Canada Post corporation.

● (1550)

Although I have serious reservations in principle about creating more Crown corporations, I welcome the creation of this one. The operations of the Post Office have been a concern of mine for the past few years and one needs only to review *Hansard* to find this out. It hardly needs to be stated that the Post Office has become a great source of frustration to all Canadians. The strikes which have shut down the Post Office over the course of the last few years have had a great and adverse effect on the lives of all Canadians. We all know that no one is immune to these disruptions in service. For businessmen who depend on this service, postal strikes mean loss of income, for various reasons. It means his cash flow is disrupted, payrolls are not met and obligations go unpaid.

Postal strikes affect the pensioner who is dependent upon government assistance as the sole source of his income. None of us in the House can truly appreciate what goes through a pensioner's mind when he hears that another disruption is looming. To be totally cut off from their only source of income is a very frightening experience for these people. Everyone, from every walk of life, is affected either directly or indirectly by postal disruptions. The Post Office is a “people issue.” To the businessman, postal strikes and work stoppages can mean the difference between solvency and bankruptcy. To the pensioner the Post Office is all that stands between life and death. And I mean this literally.

There was a time when the Post Office was the object of great admiration. Working for the Post Office was a group of men and women who diligently followed the ideal of delivering mail through rain, sleet and snow. Local history in many centres across Canada is full of examples of postmen who